

>> handle certain situations. In addition, because they are strapped for money and manpower and working long hours already, it is hard for police officers to get the time away from their most imperative duties in order to get trained on domestic violence issues.

The Department of Criminal Justice Training's Eddie Farrey offered a five-day course on domestic violence crimes and investigations. He was gracious enough to invite KDVA to help present part of that training. Up until 2011, I would give an afternoon of training and cover the legal aspects of protective order laws, some of the criminal laws and federal laws.

When Amanda's Law went into effect in July 2010, one of the changes it brought to law enforcement training is that officers are now required to have an unspecified amount of training, once every two years. So the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council has been working on the content of that training and how it will be presented.

The law specifically allowed them to use available technology, and what I've heard is that it will probably be an online training for about two hours. During 2012, that five-day domestic violence course wasn't offered by DOCJT. It was taken out of the catalog. Whether it will go back in the catalog in 2013, I don't know yet, which means KDVA will be more removed from having that substantial contact with local law enforcement agencies. I did see that as an opportunity to spend anywhere from four to eight times a year connecting with a community and making them aware of KDVA's presence.

I always enjoyed working with Eddie, because I think he is a great trainer and the training he offered was a really good, comprehensive training. You can cover a lot of ground in five days. Switching to a two-hour online format, I'm afraid that law enforcement officers won't be able to get that really rich experience Eddie was able to give them.

Other than that, KDVA has interactions very indirectly with local law enforcement, by virtue of the fact that every shelter has to interact with their local police agencies. Sometimes there can be friction there and sometimes they have a great working relationship. Probably for most programs it goes back and forth like a teeter totter just depending on circumstances.



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

▲ These dolls and soaps are fair trade items made by women from around the world. The Kentucky Domestic Violence Association sells these items to support the organization's mission and work.

Does KDVA offer training to help or rehabilitate abusers?

SHARON: KDVA does not do work with perpetrators. We don't believe you can effectively work with both victims and perpetrators. However, the state has a Batterers' Intervention Program, and they do batterers intervention treatment with perpetrators. Usually, it is a minimum of a 26-session course that helps end the violence. The goal is to end the violence. We have recently started helping to bring in outside providers for trainings that the batterers' intervention providers are required to take. So KDVA trains the providers in conjunction with the CHFS.

To be court ordered into a batterers' treatment program, the treatment program has to be certified and there are not a lot of certified people around the state. So if you're in a small, rural town, you may have to go two counties over to receive this type of training.

How can KDVA and similar organizations help law enforcement better understand the issues and the victims?

SHARON: I think we recognize and understand an officer's struggle, and shelter staff has some of the same issues when they first start working. You'd like to really be able to tell someone, 'You're making a huge mistake being in this relationship, and you need to leave.' We understand that officers get frustrated when they have to go to the same household because someone's

gone home. I think if we could do anything that would be helpful for both officers and other service providers, and survivors, it would be to help them understand how difficult the leaving process is. We know women are at most danger of death when they leave. We know that especially in these economic times, it is very difficult to leave, especially for women who have absolutely no way to support themselves. They may have small children, they have nowhere to go, yet we know violence increases in bad economic times.

Women leave five to seven times before many of them are able to finally make that break. We know it's hard for officers to understand, but it's really important that they do understand how difficult it is to make that break. It could be that she has nowhere else to go. It could be she's very afraid to leave because her abuser threatened all her family and kids.

The year that the O.J. Simpson debacle occurred, shelters were filled beyond capacity — not just in Kentucky, but around the country. That publicity made people realize women really were in danger. It's very hard to help people understand. I've done this for 25 years, and I don't know how many times I've heard officers say, 'We just keep going back and she's there again.' It's not that they are angry about it. They are frustrated and feel they can't help her. And they can't until she makes that choice. But, we all have to do our best to keep her safe.